

Workplace Traffic Safety

This is Road-Safe Workplace, an electronic newsletter about workplace traffic safety from the Vermont Department of Labor because the number one cause of death and injury in the workplace are traffic crashes. Road-Safe Workplace has been created to distribute statistics, facts, and other materials to help employers create, maintain and improve their workplace traffic safety programs. Please use this information in your company newsletters, bulletin boards, or employee e-mail memos. Your thoughts and comments are always welcome. However, if you do not wish to receive Road-Safe Workplace, please reply with the word "unsubscribe" in the subject line.



Sharing the Road Safely is a Full-Time Job

June is National Safety Month, and Project Road-Safe takes a look at various areas of traffic safety that emphasize the importance of being courteous to other motorists and pedestrians on Vermont's roadways. Sharing the road safely is very important to every Vermont employer.

One obvious and very visible type of driver routinely observed using Vermont's roadways at any time of day is the commercial truck driver, whose truck plays a very critical role in our nation's transportation system and economy as well. The numbers of trucks, large and small, on the road have increased for the past several years, and their frequent presence on our highways underscores the need to safely share the road with them.

Motorists and truck drivers must share the roadways daily, but do we really know how to do that safely?

The following Motorist's Quiz was developed by AAA Public Affairs to help focus much needed attention to this essential element of traffic safety:

If you can see a truck's side mirrors, the truck driver can see you. True or False

True. If you can see a truck's mirrors, the driver *should* be able to see you. But whether or not he or she *does* see you is another question. As a motorist, you should maneuver your vehicle into a position where a truck driver can clearly see it. Remember, the driver might not see your vehicle in certain locations, known as *no zones* or blind spots.

When passing a large truck, allow yourself:

- a. 15 seconds b. 30 seconds c. Plenty of time**

The answer is c. Allow yourself plenty of time when passing a truck. It can take up to 30 seconds to safely pass a truck at highway speeds. When you pass, do so quickly. Don't continuously drive alongside a truck -- you're in the driver's *no zone*, or blind spot. After passing, change lanes only when you can see the truck's headlights or front grill in your rearview mirror.

To maintain a safe distance, motorists should follow trucks at a distance of:

- a. At least 4 seconds b. At least 4 car lengths c. Two seconds**

The answer is a. At least four seconds are needed to keep you out of the truck's rear blind spot, or *no zone*. Use the following method to compute the correct distance: as a truck passes a stationary object alongside the road, start counting one thousand one, one thousand two, etc. You should reach one thousand four as your front bumper reaches the same object. If you arrive before you one thousand four, you are traveling too close to the back of the truck.

At an intersection, a truck immediately in front of you is signaling to make a right turn.

- Your smartest move is to: a. Go around on left. b. Stay put. c. Go around on right.**

The answer is b. Trucks make wide right turns. It may look like trucks are going straight or turning left when they are actually making a right turn. This technique --- combined with blind spots alongside the trailer --- makes trying to pass a turning truck a dangerous maneuver. Truck drivers can't see cars squeezing in between them and the curb. Stay put, and give truck drivers plenty of room to turn.

Truck drivers are professionally trained, and it is their job to drive safely. Motorists need to take special care when driving around trucks, and learn to share the road safely.

A Crash is Not an Accident – Focus on Risk Management

In a presentation on managing risk at the Fleet News Double Jeopardy conference, Rob Gifford of the UK's Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) challenged phraseology terming crashes as 'accidents', which suggests they are often random and unavoidable. "Instead," he said, "regularly there are circumstances involved, particularly with drivers being at fault that make them anything but accidental. ***Many deaths result from somebody doing or not doing something that otherwise might have prevented the incident.***" Gifford urged fleets to place greater emphasis on safety and risk management and focus on drivers' actions being the main cause.

One of Britain's most high-profile fleets, communications giant BskyB, revealed to delegates at the conference how it managed to cut accident rates by a quarter and reduce costs after a safety review. The fleet department reported on how they have transformed their approach in the past few years. In 2000, the organization did not have a formal company car or health and safety policy, no vehicle allocation rationale, with no formal driver checking policy and no trained fleet manager.

Sara Cook, who took over as fleet manager four years ago, said the review saw new policies introduced, including risk assessment and management programs, and a range of best practice schemes. As a result, incidents have fallen by 26% and average vehicle downtime has been slashed from 6.4 to 3.3 days, as the remaining vehicle incidents are less severe. An impending insurance review should also bring a reduction in costs.

Restraint Use Patterns Among Fatally Injured Passenger Vehicle Occupants

The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's National Center for Statistics and Analysis has released a Traffic Safety Facts Research Note that examines restraint use patterns among fatally injured passenger vehicle occupants. According to the research note, in 2004, the

majority of the occupants of passenger vehicles killed in motor vehicle crashes were unrestrained. When examined more closely, the data show that the proportion of unrestrained fatalities was higher among males, on rural roadways, in pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles, in single-vehicle crashes, and in the age group of 8 to 44 years old.

Alcohol Detectors For All Cars?

Many courts now require repeat drunk drivers to install ignition-interlock devices on their cars, which prevent the vehicle from starting if any alcohol is detected in the driver. But some now say the devices should be installed on every new car, USA Today reported April 27. Mothers Against Drunk Driving say the idea has merit, and New York lawmakers are considering mandating the devices on all new cars starting in 2009. Volvo and Saab plan to offer consumers an optional interlock device within the next few years. The next wave of interlock devices are likely to utilize skin tests, not breath tests, to check for alcohol use. About 70,000 interlock devices are currently installed on vehicles, mostly because of court orders. For more information, visit http://www.automotivedigest.com/view_art.asp?articlesID=18987

Diabetic Truckers May See Relaxed Medical Rules in U.S.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is considering whether to amend its medical qualifications standards to allow drivers with insulin-treated diabetes mellitus (ITDM) to operate commercial trucks in interstate commerce. Truckers whose physical conditions are adequate to allow them to operate safely and without deleterious effects on their health may soon find it easier to haul out-of-state, according to Today's Trucking. Currently, drivers with ITDM are required to obtain exemptions to operate heavy trucks in interstate commerce. FMCSA may eliminate exemption requirements for three years of trucking experience while being treated with insulin.

Employer Guidebook to Reduce Traffic Crashes

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) have joined forces to create ***Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes***. This publication features a 10-step program to help employers improve traffic safety performance and minimize the risk of motor vehicle crashes. The document includes success stories from employers who have benefited from effective driver safety programs, including Pike Industries with operations in Vermont.

The booklet is available to employers from: njames@labor.state.vt.us. Ask for the ***Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes***. The booklet will be sent in the mail, so be sure to include your mailing address. Or, employers may download the guide from http://www.osha.gov/publications/motor_vehicle_guide.pdf.

Inattention, speed, driving while impaired, disregard for stop signs and traffic lights, and failure to yield the right of way are the major causes of crashes on our highways.



**REMEMBER -- BUCKLE YOUR SEATBELT
EVERY TIME!**